

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA EDUCATION COMPACT

Donna Power Stowe
Executive Director, DC Education Compact

Testimony at the NCLB Report Card Hearing
Before the DC State Board of Education
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Acknowledgement

Board President Lisa Raymond and members of the State Board of Education- I thank you for this opportunity to testify on behalf of the DC Education Compact, and the DCEC Hub Leadership Council, at the NCLB Report Card Hearing of the DC State Board of Education. The DCEC Hub Leadership Council is comprised of the community-based leaders of each of our Hubs that together create a continuum of programs and service for children and youth ages 0-24. The Hubs and the associated community-based leaders are: 1) Early Care and Education Hub - Carrie Thornhill and Jesse Bailey of Pre K for All DC; Double the Numbers (DTN) Hub – Herb Tillery of DC College Success Foundation and the DTN Coalition; Out of School Time Hub – June Williams of DC Alliance for Youth Advocates (AYA); and Jeff Carter of DC Learns.

Introduction

I am Donna Power Stowe, Executive Director of the DC Education Compact, and I am here today, with my colleagues, to share with the Board our thoughts on the District of Columbia's NCLB Report Card and the importance of having timely reports to the community on the status of the public schools as a whole as well as providing information on key indicators on individual schools.

The DC Education Compact is committed to help ensure that the District's public schools provide excellent student learning and achievement for all children in the District and believes it is the collective responsibility of everyone in the community – at all levels of the community – to make this vision a reality. Assuring the community has accurate and useful information about the quality of their public schools is essential to the community understanding what is needed for quality schools for all and to providing the community support to sustain quality schools.

Comments on NCLB Report Card

The NCLB Report Card contains information on student achievement, teacher quality, and overall school performance, as required by federal legislation, that is invaluable to education professionals, but can be challenging for the parents and community members who are not education professionals to understand. While the federal legislation requires that the report be concise and presented in an understandable format and in language parents can understand – this too is challenging to achieve. This is the difficult balance of providing comprehensive, technical information in a clear, simple to read and easy to understand format.

To address this, we suggest that the Board include a step in the report development process that involves a committee of parents and community members to review the report's format and language before publication for user-friendliness. While it will not be possible to include every suggestion that will come from this process, involving the voice of a key audience for the report will help the Board reach the balance of substantive information and clarity of presentation. Recognizing that this process needs to be done within the established timeframe for producing the report, DCEC and our Hub network extend the offer to assist in getting parents and community members together to provide feedback.

In addition, we suggest the Board consider a variety of ways of sharing the information of the report with the community. This can include public meetings in which the key content is presented in layman's terms - how to read the report, what the data actually means, how this information will be used by the schools and the public education system to improve schools, and how parents and community members can use the information to be more engaged in their children's schools and education. This can also include information on the Board and OSSE's websites and newspaper inserts. Additionally, we suggest enlisting the community – community-based organizations, business community, other key stakeholders - in helping to carry out these additional information sessions and strategies.

Comments in General on Education Reporting

The NCLB Report Card is an important piece of reporting on the overall health of public education in DC. As we go forward as a community in developing an excellent public school system for all we will need additional information that informs us of our progress and success for the entire spectrum of ages 0-24. This will include such metrics as student readiness for pre K, college acceptance and graduation rates, truancy rates, dropout rates and literacy statistics among others. Currently, in addition to the NCLB Report Card, there are a number of other reports – from both public agencies and the civic community- that address other pieces of the 0-24 age educational continuum. Still some important metrics are not adequately reported on. As we begin to gather more accurate and complete data on our education system it is important that we work in coordination – and as collaboratively as possible – to avoid duplication and confusion in reporting to the community and to assuring we are working with the most complete, comprehensive and up to date information as possible.

DCEC – through our network of educational Hubs and our Hub Leadership Council – is helping to coordinate much of the data collection and reporting in the civic community with each other and with that of the public agencies. DCEC is working with each to develop an Operational Plan that coordinates and aligns the work of each of the Hub members around a commonly

shared set of goals and outcomes. Each Hub identifies a set of priority indicators to guide their work and data collection.

We recognize the importance of an informed and knowledgeable community in providing the support needed to sustain a quality school system. A comprehensive, easily understood assessment of the overall health of public education – ages 0-24- is critical to building this base of knowledge and support.